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ABSTRACT

Through a Bakhtinian lens highlighting the "interanimation of voices," this paper describes the research roles of a group of high school students in Southern California who participated as co-researchers and then as members of a participatory research team in a longitudinal study. Students' developing roles as question posers, methodologists, interviewers and data analyzers, presenters and writers, theory builders, and change agents are documented as they collaborated in inquiry in their high schools with teachers and with two university researchers. As these students examined their own motivations for literacy learning, they claimed personal learning agendas, gained increased voice in their schooling, and contributed to scholarly knowledge. Underlying the processes of the research have been realignment of relationships and epistemological shifts that have the potential for transforming schooling. (Contains 28 references. An appendix lists presentations by student co-researchers. Exhibits present a research status report, an e-mail sample, a sample interview, a newspaper article, and a co-researcher's note on a research team meeting agenda.) (Author/RS)

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"The Changer and the Changed": Student-Initiated Research on Literacy Motivation and Schooling

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Reading Research
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READING RESEARCH REPORT NO. 61
Summer 1996

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National Reading Research Center
University of Georgia and Maryland
Reading Research Report No. 41
Summer 1996

"The Changer and the Changed": Student-Initiated Research on Literacy Motivation and Schooling

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Abstract. *Through a Bakhtinian lens highlighting the "interanimation of voices," this paper describes the research roles of a group of high school students in Southern California who have participated as co-researchers and then as members of a participatory research team in a longitudinal study. Through inquiry focused on understanding their reasons and purposes for learning across multiple school contexts over a 6-year period, they have grappled with issues of literacy learning and motivation. The findings of that research, however, are not the central focus of this paper. Rather, we document the students' developing roles as question posers, methodologists, interviewers and data analysts, presenters and writers, theory builders, and change agents as they have collaborated in inquiry in their high schools with teachers and with two university researchers. As these students have examined their own motivations for literacy learning over the course of this study, they have claimed personal learning agendas, gained increased voice in their schooling, and have contributed to scholarly knowledge. Underlying the processes of this research have been realignments of relationships and epistemological shifts that we believe have potential for transforming schooling.*

How can I explain who I am without seeing
your face?
How will you understand without seeing mine?
How can I express how I feel without
knowing your heart?
How will you understand without knowing mine?

—Florencia Garcia, eleventh grade
student researcher

The questions posed in Florencia Garcia's poem represent qualities that have been central to the findings and relationships surrounding our research on students' intrinsic motivations for literacy learning. Her poem embodies her sense of the intertwining of voices and selves that have occurred within relationships that the students found in motivating classrooms. These intertwinings and revelations of selves have also been at the core of experiences that we have shared as a research team. Florencia wrote her poem by way of self-introduction for an article that she and two other student-researchers wrote with Thomas (Garcia,

Kilgore, Rodriguez, & Thomas, 1995). The writing of that article was one of many activities in which the students have participated over the almost 6 years of this longitudinal research (Oldfather, 1993, 1995; Oldfather & McLaughlin, 1993).

The purpose of this report is to describe outcomes of the students' involvement in a more active phase of the study in which they have conducted their own research in their high school. They have grappled with ongoing issues of literacy learning and motivation, although these are not the focus here. Rather the paper addresses concerns of voice, power, justice, and trust as the students enact roles as researchers that are generally denied them. They have become question posers, interviewers, method-ologists, theory-builders, presenters, writers, and change agents. Penny Oldfather, Sally Thomas, and eight teachers collaborate with these student-researchers on the research team. Each one involved has become, in the words of Chris Williamson's song, the "Changer and the Changed."

Project History and Methods

Chapter I

The story of our research has three chapters, all of which unfolded in a suburban community in Southern California. Initiated by Oldfather, *Chapter I* was set in Sally Thomas' fifth- and sixth-grade classroom of 31 students during the 1989-90 school year. The purpose of the initial research was to understand conditions that support students' *continuing impulse to learn*. Linked explicitly to learners' social construction of meaning, the continuing impulse to learn is *defined as*:

> An on-going engagement in learning that is propelled and focused by thought and feeling emerging from the learners' processes of constructing meaning. The continuing impulse to learn is characterized by intense involvement, curiosity, and a search for understanding as learners experience learning as a deeply personal and continuing agenda. (Oldfather, 1992, p. 8)

There are several premises about motivation underlying this research:

1. Rather than directing efforts in motivation toward trying to get students to do and learn what others advocate, such efforts should be focused on developing classrooms in which students find their passions, discover what they care about, create their own learning agendas, and most importantly, *connect what they are to what they do in school* (Oldfather, 1992).

2. When students experience meaningful connections between school and self, they will likely become lifelong learners and construct the knowledge and acquire the skills that teachers and parents hope to foster.

3. In order to begin to understand the roots of students' intrinsic motivation within schooling, we need to access their emic (or insider) perspectives, and if possible, through in-depth inquiry over substantial periods of time across multiple school settings.

The research question pursued was "What are students' perceptions of their own reasons and purposes for being or not being involved in learning activities?" Fourteen students were involved as co-researchers.[1] The rationale for their roles was based on both epistemological and ethical considerations. The students were the experts about their own perceptions and experiences upon which the research was based. It was important to avoid, as much as possible, the hierarchical relationship between researcher and researched (Gitlin, 1990). The most crucial aspect of this form of participation was that they perceived themselves as co-researchers. That has made all the difference in their ownership and investment. As Brian commented during his seventh-grade year, "If I wasn't a co-researcher, I wouldn't really understand what you are doing, so I wouldn't take this so seriously. I might not be telling you much about how I really feel."

Oldfather's role during *Chapter I* was that of participant-observer. Data included field-notes of observations and transcriptions of 41 taped interviews with students, their teacher, and the principal. There were 48 classroom visits, 95 hr of classroom observation. Interviews were open-ended and often took the form of conversations. Data was analyzed through constant comparison (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Tentative categories and properties were generated and further analyzed to identify ways in which they related to each other and to identify larger themes. Frequencies of responses were counted, and patterns for individual student profiles were analyzed across particular categories and properties.

To capsulize complex findings briefly, the baseline research indicated that students' continuing impulse to learn was linked to particular qualities of a deeply responsive classroom culture that honored students' voices, that focused on collaborative construction of meaning (rather than on extrinsic purposes), and that had supportive social structures nurturing students' sense of competence and self-determination. There were indications that students in the classroom constructed a sense of intellectual agency that was supported through classroom discourse as Sally "shared the ownership of knowing." We first began to understand the importance of this through a comment by sixth-grader Paul, who posited that "the only thing you can own is thoughts." (See Oldfather, 1993; Oldfather & Dahl, 1994; Oldfather & McLaughlin, 1993, for elaboration of the findings and methods of these earlier phases of the research.)

Chapter II

Chapter II took place from 1991–1994 through continued inquiry as the students entered junior high and then proceeded to senior high school (Oldfather & McLaughlin, 1993). One student was in an alternative school (by his own choice), one student attended a Catholic school, and the other students attended

[1] Students' backgrounds include European American, African American, Mexican American, and Pacific Islander heritage. One student was born in Argentina. Four students are bilingual. They come from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds, including low-income, middle-income, and upper-income families. They represent a wide range of academic strengths and needs.

the local public high school. Data for this phase of the study did not involve classroom observations, but included a series of in-depth interviews with each student co-researcher, as well as with some parents. During those years, we traced how their motivation for literacy learning changed and developed across different kinds of learning contexts. In both *Chapters I and II* the students helped identify the important issues and questions about their motivation for literacy learning. They provided elaboration, verification, and correction of the developing interpretations of the study. The co-researchers presented at national conferences (e.g., The American Educational Research Association and the National Reading Conference), as well as to their local school board, and teacher education classes. (See Appendix for listing of students' presentations.)

Chapter III

In *Chapter III*, the students' roles changed from co-researchers to researchers as they initiated their own participatory research in their high school. They collaborated with high school teachers to explore teachers' perceptions about motivation for literacy learning, and to discern how teachers make decisions about motivation in their classrooms. Reciprocally, they shared what they have learned about environments that support intrinsic motivation for literacy learning. Of the 14 original student co-researchers, 4 have moved away. Eight of the 10 remaining students are participating in *Chapter III* of the research. Sally Thomas, now a college professor, has joined the research team. During this phase, we have two nested studies: one study, in which the students have been conducting their research, and the other (reported herein), in which Oldfather and Thomas have examined what takes place through these student-initiated inquiries.

The student researchers each chose a teacher-collaborator whom they respected as motivating and with whom they felt comfortable. They conducted a series of taped interviews that were transcribed and returned to them for analysis and preparation for the next interviews. Oldfather and Thomas were available for consultation about this process of constant comparative analysis. We facilitated progress through regular contact with students. (See research status report example, Exhibit A.) Some students were connected with the research team through electronic mail. Our original hope was that e-mail would become a mainstay of research team communications, and also serve as a data source. Unfortunately, this aspect of the study was not fully successful. Only about half of the student-researchers have used e-mail consistently. (See Exhibit B for a sample of e-mail correspondence.) Data also included interactive journals with teachers, examples of student work, teachers' lesson plans, and other artifacts. Additionally, videotaped meetings documented the planning, problem solving, and data analysis activities of the student research team, including those conducted during two 3-day summer retreats in 1994 and 1995. As when the project was initiated, data were analyzed through constant comparison. Some analysis was conducted by the students and some by Oldfather and Thomas. As an in-depth longitudinal study, this research contributes in robust ways to a grounded

theory of students' motivation for literacy learning, expanding students' roles beyond those of "subjects" to those of co-researchers, researchers, and agents of change in schooling.

Theoretical Framework

The study is grounded in several bodies of research including the literature on intrinsic motivation—particularly work on self-determination (Deci & Ryan, 1987), emergent motivation (Csikszentmihalyi, 1978), and continuing motivation (Mueller, 1976). As the research unfolded in *Chapter II*, our thinking was increasingly informed by social constructivist perspectives (Oldfather & Dahl, 1994; Vygotsky, 1978; Bakhtin as discussed by Wertsch, 1978); and feminist theory (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986; Ellsworth, 1989; Hollingsworth, 1992; Luther, 199; Lyons, 1990). *Chapter III* has pushed us to take into account critical theory (Freire, 1970; Giroux, 1987; O'Loughlin, 1992) and some forms of participatory and educative research (Carr & Kemmis, 1986; Gitlin, 1990; Heath, 1991; Kincheloe, 1993; Reason, 1994).

The initial decision to invite students to be co-researchers has made a critical difference in their engagement and commitment to the learning occurring throughout the research process. It has also made the students more consciously aware of the discourse and methodologies of research. Working in the zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978) with an experienced adult, the students' original role was that of legitimate peripheral participation (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Their roles were not identical to Oldfather's. In the first phases of the study, they did not conduct interviews, analyze data, or build theory. They informed the study through active inquiry—in a sense "researching" their own thinking by reflecting and probing their understandings. They highlighted important issues and questions. At the same time, they often heard explicitly and experienced implicitly Oldfather's methodology, including the values and assumptions underlying her research.

Since that time the students have continuously and recursively moved between a rich collaboration on the social plane among student peers and adult researchers and independent problem solving. They have taken on more sophisticated research roles as they solve increasingly complex problems. Through the use of language as a mediating tool, the students have grown into "the intellectual life of those around them" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 88).

Bakhtin's concepts of voice and the multiplicity of social discourses further inform specific ways in which students and adults have grown, as well as the generativity that occurs when multiple voices meet. Meaning comes into existence when voices (speaking subjects expressing particular perspectives and intentions) come into contact with other voices. "Any true understanding is dialogic in nature" (Voloshinov, p. 102, as cited in Wertsch, 1991, p. 54), and it is through dialogic texts that new meanings occur.

The research has included a variety of voices from the beginning: student, researcher, and teacher-researcher. New teacher voices have recently been invited. The longitudinal nature of the research, the opportunities for multiple conversations over time, has created

an exceptionally rich intertextuality or "interanimation of voices" (Wertsch, 1991, p. 75). Our shared history, recalled in the form of both written texts and oral retellings, allows us to hear our voices and selves, past and present, inside and outside of schools, alone and in dialogue with each other. We have created a series of ongoing stories, developing, overlapping, evolving with retellings. Students not only listen carefully to each other, referring to each other's contributions to ongoing dialogues, but they also recall memorable quotes from the past: the voices of their peers or their past selves. Students recall events and contexts which both confirm and differ from the same events told from the perspective of the teachers, the university researchers, or the other students. We wonder at and learn from these collisions of perspectives and from the new questions and understandings that emerge. In the process, the importance of multiple perspectives is underscored. Students have come to understand the socially constructed nature of our multiple realities.

The conversational nature of our dialogue has been important, allowing our various voices to intermingle. Conversations support the connected knowing which builds not only on the cognitive or rational, but also on the emotional, intuitive, and experiential as resources for creating knowledge (Belenky et al., 1986). Relationships have changed as realignments of power have taken place (Gitlin, 1992; Hollingsworth, 1992). We all have a "say," our voices are honored (Oldfather, 1993).

Equally important have been the students' opportunities to experience and reflect on the more abstract decontextualized discourses of research, discourses not normally available to students of this age group. These discourses have been gradually appropriated by the students as they adapt them to their own interests. Heightened epistemological development has emerged from this appropriation of discourse, and from what Lyons (1990) described as "nested knowing." Students' notions of what it means to *know* have expanded, in part, through the views of the nature of knowledge that are held within the learning culture of the research team.

Though initially less self-consciously political, we see the inquiries conducted by the research team as participatory research. Common qualities of this form of inquiry include valuing the lived experiences of people, valuing democratic collaboration and believing in the power of people to create and use their own knowledge for constructive purposes (Reason, 1994). We believe that we are approaching what Freire (1970) called *conscientization*.

> N: I find myself in class sometimes now saying, "This is what I was talking about [through our research interviews]. This is what we should be doing better. I feel like we've looked into it so much, we've talked about it so much, that I've used it positively toward my work and how I feel about school. . . .

Nicki went on to say later:

> I found that part of what I have learned is to talk to the teacher to let them know what I felt, if I thought something was unfair, or if I thought something could be changed to make it more interesting for us. And when I find it frustrating is when I try to do that and I'm not

listened to. And that's also what our research is about: "being heard" and "your opinion counts." And when you don't feel that way, it really gets frustrating.

The students have used literacy to name and change the worlds in which they live and learn. In Freirean (1970) terms, students are not just reading the word, but reading the world in politically conscious ways.

> *J:* Throughout life there is oppression and if you don't question it—racism, oppression, sexism, what ever it may be—if you don't question it, it's not going to change. It's going to be taken as "Oh, it's all right." And if somebody tries to oppress somebody else, I would hope they would say something. If no one ever says anything, it's not going to change. (Garcia et al., 1995, pp. 135-136)

They are discovering that through both kinds of reading, they can change the world and are themselves changed in the process. They seek emancipatory outcomes for themselves and others.

Reconstellation of Research Roles

The roles of the participants in our project have continually undergone reconstellation, as students become increasingly knowledgeable and confident in the full array of activities involved in qualitative research. What follows are examples from transcripts of interviews and research team meetings that illustrate the thinking and activities of student researchers. Examples (many of which overlap across other categories) include students' roles as question posers, methodologists, interviewers and analyzers, presenters and writers, theory builders, and change agents. Also illustrated are examples of the shared history and ongoing community building within the research team.

Students' Roles As Question-Posers

It was Florencia's question that set off discussion leading to the students' decision to initiate participatory research. The following vignette portrays this pivotal event.

> At the close of Chapter II, [Penny and Sally] were beginning to feel a sense of closure and wondered if our research was completed. We took this question to the research team. Were the questions answered? Were we ready to bring the study to a close? Was it time to move on to other activities? This prompted a remarkable discussion. The students passed the tape recorder with increasing animation, vying for "air time" to speak their minds. [Sally and Penny] were in the background. The co-researchers had clearly taken charge of the agenda for the focal group. They looked back across the different classroom contexts to consider how their thinking had changed, and whether the old questions were still relevant in the new settings. They considered issues of transitions. They wondered if their elementary school years were "much like reality." They criticized the goal orientations of many of their junior high classes. They debated whether they were properly prepared in some subjects during different phases of their schooling. Abigail felt

that [their elementary school] "was good because—it might not have all the things like spelling and everything, but it really showed us who we were, you know. Helped us become ourselves, sort of."

This was the point at which Florencia raised an issue debated by curriculum theorists across the decades: ***"I have a question: Who has the right to decide what people should learn?"*** Even more vigorous debate rumbled forth. It became clear at that moment that this research was going to continue. There was going to be a Chapter III. (Oldfather, 1995, p. 133)

From the beginning, research team meetings have been characterized by question posing. As one student observed, "It seems like our meetings always get to that point where everyone's asking questions. Stuff just starts to fly at the moment." Students have a sense of what they want to know, and generally feel confident about pursuing these issues:

> *S:* I want to go out on my own path first and just kind of generalize and ask [my teacher] lots of questions and then after I feel more comfortable, I think then I'd like to narrow it down and do more stuff. I still have so many questions. I have a little pad and paper by my bed, and I just write down questions that I'd like to ask him.

Students share ideas for productive questions with other members of the research team. The example below needs to be understood in relationship to the students' growing understanding that what happens in schools to motivate students may depend a great deal upon teachers' motivation and that students are not the only ones who have struggles in the classroom.

> *J:* I had a general question to ask Ms. Kerber for the longest time. I just wanted to share this with you guys. I thought maybe you'd want to ask your teacher this. I guess there was an altercation in her class and a student picked up a desk to throw it at another student because they were fighting. And for the rest of the day . . . she was kind of "off" because of that. She seemed really upset. Maybe a little scared. . . . We're always talking about the good things. But there's also bad things, you know. Not every teacher's going to be able to get along with every student. There are differences and altercations that happen so you can't—you have to touch on the good and then you have to also say, "*Well what do you do when something like this happens?*" "*How does it make you feel when something like this happens?*" A question like that.

Students' Roles as Methodologists

Students' understandings of qualitative research processes are exemplified through many of their suggestions regarding ongoing methodological decisions. An interaction within the research team meeting relating to question focus and theoretical sampling between Florencia and Marcel is a case in point:

> *F:* I think it's good that we're all going in different paths, but I think we should also ask some of the same questions so we get some kind of . . .
>
> *M* (interrupting): I think we will, unknowingly.

F: Yeah, but I think it would be good to talk [in research team meetings] about what came up more. Because it could be something that we hadn't thought about. And then it could be really interesting to us and we'd want to know. And then we could also get the input from the teacher to see . . . the number of different teachers that feel the same way.

Florencia's insights about the value of classroom observations for deepening understandings and for identifying other participants for the research is evident in this suggestion:

F: I think it might be kind of neat to sit in different classes and kind of look at the way different teachers [teach] and how they run the class. And . . . list what you see and how those students are responding. And kind of make your own interpretations. Like if you find a way one of the teachers is like really interesting and like all the students are really involved, (well not all of them—but most of them) get like really into the class. Then I think that might make us want to interview them to see how they got their ideas and what made them do what they do.

At another point, there was a dialogue in the research team about possibilities for random sampling beyond the group of teachers selected for the study.

J: I know I am tempted to want to go to a different school and interview a teacher that I know nothing about. Just you know, like put teachers in a circle and get in the middle of a circle and cover my eyes and spin around and wherever I stop, just interview that person.

PO: And why is that?

J: I mean, here we are talking about interviewing teachers that we all like. That we already know.

K: You know, I don't think you're going to interview a teacher that you don't like.

J: Yeah. But I mean we need to have the average, the average fool, the average opinion. I mean when you are trying to figure out who is winning between the presidents when they are running or the candidates when they are running, you don't go and ask the town called "Republican," and you don't go ask a town called "Democrat." . . . You know it is not one or the other. It is both. . . . You want to know what is really going on out there.

Later in this conversation we revisited the difference between random sampling and the purposeful sampling used in this research, a topic that had arisen during our first research team retreat.

Students' Roles in Data Analysis and Interviewing

Although Penny and Sally continue to do a great deal of work on data analysis with the project, the students are also quite involved. Segments from research team dialogues indicate some of their thinking about both analysis and interviewing.

B: I read Lizz's interview with Ms. Adam on November 21, 1994. I found it was kind of interesting. When I first looked, Lizz asked a question, a good question, kind of a broad question about motivation. And it was like

they never really got a conversation started. Ms. Adam asked Lizz a question like, "How do you think I motivate?" And then Lizz told a lot about it, and then Ms. Adam started talking and that's when they really started getting into it. So it wasn't like an interview. It was more like a conversation. Which I think is very important. Because I think every time I noticed Lizz asking a question it stopped. When they were just talking back and forth there was so much more in the story. And I think that was really important. That you should just get talking with your teacher. When you try too hard to search for an answer, you're not always going to get what you mean. And when you're just talking, it's going to come. (See Exhibit C for an excerpt from this interview.)

When comparing interviews with teachers conducted by two different research team members, Jolin noted the following.

J: The questioning is so different. I listened to what Nicki and Ms. Shanah were talking about, and then I think about what myself and Ms. Kerber talked about. And it was like almost everything that I talked to her about was her past experiences just with teaching and why she wanted to do things. It seemed like Nicki was asking not so much why she was teaching, but what needed to be done. So it was just different lines of questioning.

In her own analysis of that same interview with her teacher collaborator, Nicki was considering a new slant on the research:

N: Actually, I was going through and marking it up. I was writing some notes on the side and realized that a lot of what we discussed seemed to have to do with personality types. The way that some teachers teach and the way that they can interact with the students depends a lot on the personality. Like the atmosphere you create in the class has to do with the teacher's personality, the student's personality—who learns well in that atmosphere and who doesn't. So I think we're opening another door right there because our research . . . has always been [about] a focus on certain aspects of the curriculum that help us learn. Whereas, I think we're opening a door to really maybe focusing a little more . . . on [the possibility that] there are students out there—and there are teachers out there—that can't handle the atmosphere and can't learn that way.

Students' Roles as Theory Builders

There are times when the students put forth a "theory" about how to make sense of what we are trying to understand about learning and motivation. Below are two examples from students spontaneous statements during research team meetings in which they used metaphorical thinking to capture and put forth their ideas.

A: I feel that the people from [our elementary school] are like Mustang horses. Wild. And they're still kicking and they haven't been broken in yet, and that people from [other schools] who have gotten grades and homework every day and haven't done like Da Vinci soul searching. They're broken. They're tame and they're passive and they

just kind of walk through the pasture. And they won't have the same ideas as us.

Andy's metaphor and Nicki's observation circle back to a still-unanswered question posed in 1991 when five of the students, Sally, and Penny presented a session at the Conference on Qualitative Research in Education at the University of Georgia. During the discussion, Carl Glickman asked the students whether they believed that students in other schools would view intrinsic motivation in the same ways they do. In the responses, the student presenters differed among themselves and continue to debate this issue 5 years later.

The following comment by John demonstrates his efforts to expand thinking beyond the immediate context of schooling and perspectives of students.

J: In almost everything, it seems like there's always some kind of outside influence. You look at just the baseball strike. There's outside influences on that. These people feel this way, the fans feel this way. The people who back the teams feel this way. So it seems that in every type of organization there's an outside influence. And school to me just seems to be an organization. It's an organization of learning, but it's a job for people. So just like in my parents' jobs, they may get frustrated every once in awhile, and a lot of students never really think that teachers might also be frustrated by the same things that bother us or our parents.

Students' Roles as Writers and Presenters

As described previously, the students have had an active part in writing and presenting the findings of this research. When the students themselves interact with audiences about research findings, they do this much more effectively than we do when we represent their ideas "second hand." The following are some of their comments about presenting:

P: I'd rather present [our research at a conference] than go on a vacation.

In [presentations] we were at a level with the audience every time. To our teachers we were in level chairs. We had the same goal in mind. That's an excellent way. It's what classrooms should be like. We specialize in questions and answers and not work pages.

P: Our presentations aren't necessarily presentations with slides and graphs. We're just describing the foundations of what we came from and what we have already experienced. It's more like sharing as equals.

F: I like the part after presentations when we get to hear about what they thought about what we said. When they're asking questions, you can tell they are actually listening to you.

J: I like question sessions, too, because in a speech I don't know what they need to know, or what they want to know, and hearing their questions tells me a little more about different areas and what's going on.

We have certainly learned that not everyone within the educational community

is interested in having students involved in research presentations. We received feedback on one proposal to AERA in which the students would have presented from a reviewer who questioned whether it was right to "put the students on the spot" in a setting with university researchers.

Florencia commented about a meeting of teachers to which the students were invited to present that was not received very well.

F: Our recent talk to teachers was so hard. They weren't responsive. They were attacking what we said. But that was expected, too. Paul's writing was really powerful. It said a lot and they didn't really respond at all. They were telling us that we were young and that's how the world was and it couldn't be changed. It was kind of sad, because they don't realize it can! We've found out lots. Made small changes that add up. We have made a difference, I'm sure.

Students and Teachers as Change Agents

As Florencia indicated, the students initiated this participatory research because they wanted to make a difference. In our 1994 research team retreat, she described the goals in this way:

F: What we want to do is we want to get teachers more aware of the students' perspectives and students also more aware of the teachers' perspectives. We want to establish how we think students could get motivated better. What motivates teachers? . . . What we're trying to do is, we're trying to make the classes more interesting.

Confronted by a question about the possibility of teachers not being willing to be involved, Florencia continued.

F: Why would the teachers reject what we're doing? We don't have this path that we're saying, "We're going straight to this." We're kind of making it up as we go along. We don't know if our goal's set in stone, that we're going to totally change the school. If there's a teacher that isn't going to want to strive for a goal where they feel that the students are more involved or they feel that the kids are actually excited again to go to their class and excited to learn—if there are teachers that don't want that to happen, what can we do? There are always going to be people like that. . . . Why would there be people like that? It's kind of ridiculous!

John responded with some radical optimism:

J: Look at the teachers we have. You're always going to have a few trouble makers, but you can't let that stop you. You've got to overcome those hurdles. We have all these great teachers that we're interviewing. All of us have these wonderful teachers at our school. You're never going to get everyone to agree on everything, and you can't strive for that. You've got to appeal to the masses and get emotion going, and if these people aren't going to cooperate, then hopefully they're going to get bulldozed over. A kind of revolution.

F: I sort of think that maybe the teachers that might have a problem with what we're doing is because they feel threatened and they might think that we're trying to take over the school.

As it has turned out, the teacher-collaborators in the research are significant allies in the change process. Below is a statement made by a teacher-collaborator, Ms. Shamah, in an early research team meeting:

> I would like our administration and probably the whole school to have the opportunity to have [information about your research] presented to them. You guys have presented to conferences outside the school, but it would be wonderful . . . to have that opportunity eventually. . . . I'm a really goal-oriented human being. . . . I want something to happen with it. I want some action to be taken as a result. . . . I really would like to know that something positive—or negative— . . . is going to come out of this. And that means that a lot of people need to know about it and to take it seriously. And that won't happen unless the administration is requested to take a look at it and maybe give us a chance. Or give the kids a chance.

Possibilities for ways that the students might become involved in curricular activities have been proposed by Ms. Raiguel:

> I see another possibility, and that is part of you or teams of you coming into some of my classes and modeling for other students on our campus how to do research. Helping them design a question that they might want to investigate about ethnicity or diversity or racism, which are the issues we talk about in Ethnic Lit. Or motivation, or any of the questions. And then actually using the whole student-driven research to motivate a lot of our students to have more investment in how they learn.

Throughout the research, students have acted as change agents in small but important ways. For example, in seventh and eighth grades, the students were invited back to their elementary school to help the younger children reflect on ways school restructuring might better support their learning needs and interests. The student-researchers led large and small group discussions and carried out individual interviews, greatly enhancing the quality of the children's contributions to the planning process.

Nicki voiced her concerns about several issues in earlier years at the high school: the desire for more student involvement in daily announcements over the loudspeakers and a protest over the removal of pay phones. A year after those efforts, students were allowed more involvement with school announcements. However, she was left frustrated with regard to the pay phones.

Florencia's teacher-collaborator invited her to collaborate in planning a new course in creative writing. Paul, who attends an alternative school, designed and proposed a new course that was taught in the Spring of 1995. As he wrote in his school newspaper, "One of the most exciting things about this class is that the agenda will be created by both the teacher and the student working together. This idea in the classroom invokes motivation and is much needed." (See Paul's article in Exhibit D.) Since then, other courses at the Alternative School have built on the format Paul designed.

When Paul shared his idea at the summer 1995 retreat, the other student-researchers were inspired to pursue a similar course at the other high school. Since the beginning of *Chapter III*, students have been able to effect change in a number of ways, including the ideas proposed by teachers already mentioned. As part of school-wide restructuring supported by the State of California, five student-researchers are currently collaborating with teachers (some of whom are newly-involved) on a cross-curricular portfolio project. The students are helping the teachers examine alternative ways to make learning visible in their classrooms.

The students, teachers, and the assistant principal are exploring additional ways in which the students can be involved in the restructuring efforts, including possible presentations to the high school faculty as a whole. A number of the student-researchers are in leadership roles in the high school, and are in a position to facilitate change. Nicki, for example, serves as the current president of the Associated Student Body.

Students' Roles in Building a Community of Researchers

The sense of community among the research team began in Sally Thomas' classroom. Through subsequent work and travels together, we have developed lore, rituals, and insider jokes.

> Research team rituals include not only traditional pizza and soft drinks, but recounting the stories from our travels. Tales are retold about late night talks in Georgia that solved all the world's problems – and left the adults exhausted in the morning. We remember Paul's amazement at touching the ground in six states on a cross-country trip (even if only to go to the bathroom). We savor the car ride home from a conference when John presented a 30-minute parody of a lecture on cell biology that made us laugh until we cried. We celebrate the moment in Palm Springs when Marcel as a fifth grader put his hand on his hip during the "Birds of a Feather" session at the National Reading Conference and commented to the audience of professors: "I'd like to turn the tables here. There are some questions I'd like to ask you" (Oldfather, 1995, p. 133).

Contributions to our shared history continue. Marcel's capsulation of the first interview with his teacher in the full research team meeting had us all in stitches. "Mrs. Andrus has counted the thing [the interview transcript] and we're 23 pages. Of course, part of it was on hair. I don't know how we got on that part." We do. As their ideas have evolved through the years, so have their hair styles, ranging from Marcel's signature crown of wild, black curls, to John's freshly shaved bald head topping his lanky, 6-foot-5-inch frame. Changes in noses contribute to another narrative strand in our shared history. When the question was posed in a research team meeting about the ways in which we have changed, John commented that "All our noses are bigger."

John said his role in the community is that of "comic relief." "I've made a point of mak-

ing someone laugh. *I bring a liveliness to the group. I try to make it more relaxed.*" He also has a sense of the effort that Penny and Sally put into the project, sending a note to Penny that he had scrawled on the research team agenda, "Students and teachers working as 1! Does that surprise you?! It's all because of you. Thanx! (signed) *John B. P. Kilgore, Jr.*" (See John's note and team meeting agenda in Exhibit E.)

Florencia commented, "*My role* has been keeping some of the research together. I'll ask 'How's your research *going*? Have you done any interviews lately?' Personally, I can offer my time and knowledge. *My roles are* interviewer, researcher, and keeping us together." Describing the interactions of our research team over the years, Florencia declared,

> F: It always worked. It was like we were friends in the classroom. *We'd* speak to each other. When we got together in this other group [the research team], it was different. We weren't speaking about the same kind of things. It was *important* what we were speaking about. It was something that we all—I wanted to learn about it. And I was learning about it while I was doing the project, but I hadn't realized it. . . . We're still together, and I'm glad. I don't think we would be as close as we are without the project.

Reflections on the Intermingling of Voices

The way in which the research team built community through shared history is an example of one level of Bakhtin's "interanimation of voices," as described by Wertsch (1991). This interanimation is central to the processes of creating new knowledge. Brian's comments on Lizz's interview with her teacher-collaborator are illustrative. Brian noted, "When I first looked, Lizz *asked a question, a good question, kind of a broad question about motivation.*" He explained that when Lizz asked too many little questions, the conversation stops. "Talking back and forth, there was so much more to the story. . . . When you're just talking, it's going to come." We can trace the roots of his thinking to two interviews 4 years earlier. Following a discussion about in-depth learning, Penny had asked Brian, as a seventh grader, for his perceptions about how she conducted interviews. Brian believed that in most interviews, "someone goes in with a list of questions, and reads off the questions, gets a sentence answer, writes 'em down. . . ." He noted that Penny asked broader questions, that he believed got more information.

> B: It's not a sentence answer, it's more like a page answer. . . . It's not just a yes or no answer. . . . If it's a yes, . . . then [it's] a why. *Why do you feel that way? Do you feel that way about anything else?* You're not skimming across the top and asking simple questions about every part. You're getting in-depth.

In another interview, Brian initiated a question to Penny: "What would *you* do differently if we were 'subjects' and not co-researchers?" Penny described possibilities such as carrying out experiments, following strict interview protocols, asking everyone the same questions, having less give and take among the participants in the research, interacting in ways that might be less like *conversations*. Brian built

immediately upon the notion of conversation, contrasting that with answering questions.

> *B:* When we're having a conversation, you can say, "Well, remember when I said something about this school? It's about the same . . . but different so . . . . You're not telling her why. You're not explaining it. You're just answering the questions and going on. . . . You learn a lot more if you can have a conversation.

Brian goes on to reflect on the interweaving of voices during research team discussions.

> *B:* 'Cause then the group can learn from each other, and everyone has a different point of view. You're not just learning one person's point of view. . . . One person can make a response and the other person can go in-depth about that. . . . If you have a group, one person gives a response and then someone else will think of something else that they haven't said before. Because it's like, it's almost like listening to their own voice say it and remembering something that they didn't say when you interviewed them previously.

Brian has articulated a tacit sense of the Bakhtinian principles at work in our research. As the research project has unfolded, we see that unself-consciously at first, and later more self-consciously, we have used the generativity created by this interanimation of voices.

In *Chapter I* of the research, Penny brought the co-researchers together—indeed, Sally's whole class—to hear what had been said individually, to consider the emerging findings collectively, and to confirm, disconfirm, or elaborate the sense she was making of the research. Brian's suggestion, along with others, informed *Chapter II*, as the co-researchers met together regularly. The intensity and duration of these meetings grew, and in *Chapter III* team meetings and retreats focused on the student-initiated project in their high school. These meetings naturally began with informal recalling and re-telling of our research stories. We also examined and discussed transcripts and/or publications of our findings. These texts captured group memory and individual voices in print, bringing the previous voices back to the present moment, sometimes making us aware of a collision of old and new perspectives. The dissonance as well as the consonance have been generative. Our purpose has not been to aggregate or to find the answer. Answers differ over time and in different contexts, even for the same students. Our effort, rather, has been to represent the complexities of contrasting as well as shared perspectives on issues of motivation and literacy learning.

Struggles and Limitations

As participatory research, this project moves away, to some extent, from the hierarchical relationships inherent in many forms of research. But we are quite aware of the power imbalances still present in the high school setting. In seeking to understand teachers' conceptions and approaches to motivation, the students are "studying up"—an uncommon practice in almost any arena of research. Even though the teachers are engaged as collaborators, there is nevertheless an implicit understanding that they are in a position of greater

power than the students. As illustrated in this report, the students did have concerns about the kind of reception they might have in approaching teachers with the project.

There are other power imbalances as well. The students do not make some of the key decisions about which conferences we will attend and which students will be asked to present findings. Even though the student and now the teacher voices are at the center of the team meetings, in the end they are not in positions of responsibility to organize them.

There have been times we worried that the research might not really get off the ground. Most of the students are extremely busy. All of them have very active social and school lives. Florencia was right when she described her role as keeping some of the research together. Sometimes it has felt like a large task to keep things together. Students have not always followed through on their commitments. On a practical level, it was not easy to take nine junior high students to stay overnight at a hotel in Palm Springs to present at the National Reading Conference.

On a political level, we have, at some moments, discovered our own conservatism as we saw the eagerness of the students, collaborating teachers, and even the high school administration to move forward with action in the high school while we were feeling that more groundwork needed to be laid. We felt at times apologetic. We worried that the project might be viewed as intrusive by others who might wonder "Who the hell are they to come in as outsiders to change our school?" We were, in fact, accused by one teacher over a research team collaborator's of "using" the students. Although students and parents reassure us to the contrary, one could make a strong case that we as university researchers are the ones who most directly benefit from the project. We are concerned about the privacy of the teachers, and about possible negative consequences for students. The responsibilities in every regard weigh heavily. We must acknowledge the limits of "emancipation," both the students' and our own.

Are You Going to College With Us?

Marcel has posed yet another question full of outrageous possibilities. "Are you going to college with us?" In a literal sense, we *do* not know. Bakhtin might argue that we *will* all be there.

Our purpose in this report was to describe students' roles in this third chapter of the research as question posers, interviewers, methodologists, theory builders, presenters, writers, and change agents. As we have struggled to understand the students' transformations, we have been challenged to consider how their growth and our growth have occurred.

Although not the focus of this report, specific findings coming from the students' research have emerged. There is significant diversity among the approaches used by teachers whom students perceive to support intrinsic motivations for literacy learning. Nested motivation, like nested knowing (Lyons, 1990), is a strong theme and has generated two new questions: What motivates teachers? How does teacher motivation relate to student motivation? The students' growing awareness of teachers'

needs and perspectives is a third theme. As John regularly reminds the team, teachers are human too.

Florencia's poem conveys the importance of understanding each other's hearts. This metaphoric understanding of the centrality of relationships provides unity, both literally and metaphorically, for our research and for literacy motivations in classrooms. Another unifying thread is the importance of making time to talk, to build community, to visit and revisit ideas at our own pace.

An important lesson from our work has to do with the possibilities offered by participatory research to the field of motivation. We are seeing that as students, in the roles of co-researchers and researchers, reflect deeply about their own motivations for literacy learning and collaborate with teachers in such inquiry, they move toward owning their learning agenda, making a difference in schools, and contributing to scholarly knowledge. They grow into "the intellectual life of those around them" (Vygotsky, 1978) as they take on the discourse of research and enact their research roles in their lives as learners.

The fundamental issues embedded in all aspects of this work are epistemological. Our baseline study indicated that a key element of intrinsic motivation is what Oldfather (1992) called *epistemological empowerment*: "the sense of intellectual agency and ability to know that emerges from a strong sense of the integrity of one's processes of constructing meaning" (p. 9). The students' intellectual agency has been both enhanced by and demonstrated through our work together. Lyons' (1990) construct of teacher change includes what she calls "a realignment of one's relationships with students; that is, not only the teacher's way of interacting with students in learning, but a conception of the student as a knower and learner shifts" (p. 175). This "shared ownership of knowing" (Oldfather, 1993) gives rise to the realignment of relationships that have played out in the reconstellations we have described.

We argue that in the larger context, what is necessary is a fundamental shift of the dominant epistemology in our society and our schools: trusting, listening to, and respecting the integrity of the minds of all participants in schooling. When Sally asked John what a school could learn if it got serious about listening to students, his answer was simple: "That we have minds" (Garcia et al., 1995, p. 142). John's answer and Florencia's poem lead us back to Sonia Nieto's (1994) vision: that the transformation of schooling requires the transformation of hearts and minds.

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Appendix

Presentations by Student Co-Researchers

Alexander, M., Glickman, C., Grannis, N., Oldfather, P., Rodriguez, P., Thomas, S., Wiggington, E., & Foxfire students. (1992, April). *Honoring their voices: Students and teachers describe classroom adventures that have changed their lives*. Invited symposium presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Francisco, CA.

Banks, A., Schwimmer, L., Petersen, B., Rodriguez, P., Grannis, N., & Kilgore, J. (Spring 1991). Presentation to local school district board meeting.

Oldfather, P., Thomas, S., Garcia, F., Grannis, N., Harrington, K., Kilgore, J., Tjioe, M., & Petersen, B. (1991, March). *Multiple perspectives on a qualitative study of student motivation*. Symposium at the Claremont Reading Conference, Claremont, CA.

Oldfather, P., Thomas, S., Grannis, N., Rodriguez, P., Banks, A., Kilgore, J., & Schwimmer, L. (1991, January). *Researcher, classroom teacher and student co-researchers jointly present three perspectives on a classroom qualitative research experience*. Paper symposium presented at the annual conference on Qualitative Research in Education, The University of Georgia, Athens, GA.

Oldfather, P., Thomas, S., Banks, A., Garcia, F., Grannis, N., Harrington, K., Kilgore, J., Merseth, A., Schwimmer, L., Tjioe, M., & Petersen, B. (1991, December). *Multiple perspectives on a qualitative study of motivation in a whole language classroom: Student co-researchers, classroom teacher, and researcher*. Symposium presented at the 41st annual meeting of the National Reading Conference, Palm Springs, CA.

Exhibits

A: Research Status Report

B: E-mail Sample

C: Sample Interview

D: Paul's Newspaper Article

E: John's Note on Research Team Meeting Agenda

Exhibit A

FLORENCIA GARCIA'S

Research Status Report

Email Status:
Are you Online? Yes

If so, are you using email? Yes

If not, what help do you need?

Interview	Date	Tape Copied	Transcription Rec'd
✓ #1	11/14/94	Yes	Yes
✓ #2	1/19/95	Yes	Yes
✓ #3	4/6/95		
#4			

Other Data Collected:
(Please list what you have collected, and whether Sally has received copies.)

Items Collected	To Sally	
		Interactive journals - I have written to Julie Shepard a couple of times - not received any interactive journals
✓		Field notes (observations of classroom visits) I have taken notes while in the classroom (when during various transactions - I have typed them up.
		Photographs (To Sally for film development) I haven't taken any photographs
✓	✓	Teacher materials (lesson plans, grading policies, parent communications (grading policies collected)
✓	✓	Student surveys or interviews - 2 students participated in the small interviews I had with Julie Shepard.
✓	✓	Other - I have photocopied a few of the student work that Ms Shepard gave me. I have collected 2 examples of student work done by students

Information about activities resulting from your research.
(For example, being invited to speak to a class about the research, participating on a committee, conversations with other teachers or administrators at CHS or other schools, etc.) Please write on back of sheet.

We are including three copies: one for you, one to give to Sally, one to share with your teacher collaborator. (Or, you may prefer to xerox the original.)

- Jill Raiguel invited me to speak to her class about the research. I was going to sit in class & take notes one day, and then share what I had been doing, but I didn't get a chance to do so. I plan on doing something of the sort in the near future
- I have been thinking about interviewing students to see if there are similarities in student motivation or to see if different aspects of motivation need to be given a closer look.
- I helped Mrs Raiguel in a lesson plan for her creative writing class
- I have spoken to Mrs Martinez several times while passing through the halls & she has questioned me about the progress of the research & the possibility of its presentation
- I took part in the meeting with Mrs Elsa Martinez, Sally, Penny, & Jill Raiguel - explaining the project & its possibilities
- I am part of the "Service Learning Task Force" which is looking for a way to incorporate hands-on learning experiences into the curriculum

Exhibit B

Dear Penny, Sally, and fellow researchers,
I had my first interview with Ms. Raiguel on Friday, November 18. I was somewhat nervous when I began the interview, but once we started talking, everything went just fine. I interviewed Ms. Raiguel during my sixth period, which seemed to work alright. The only problem was that we had a few interruptions during the interview, since there were people coming in and out of her class, so I had to stop recording about three or four times.

The interview itself went well. I first asked her to tell me why she had chosen to be a teacher. I guess it was a pretty good question, because, from that question, she answered many of the other questions which I was going to ask her. I had written down the questions I would ask on index cards, but then found myself making up the questions as we talked. Most of the questions I had in mind, I didn't even have to ask, because she was talking about it on her own.

I did have a problem however, when I finished asking her the questions that came to mind as we talked. I hadn't kept track of the questions I had already asked, which I had written on the index cards, so I had to go through them to see if all of the questions I had, had been answered. Until I finally found one that hadn't yet been answered, there was somewhat of a pause. It seemed to last a long time during the interview, but when I heard the tape, it really hadn't been as long a pause as it had felt.

Well, overall, it was very fascinating to hear her talk about her ways of teaching. Since I had been in one of her classes, I could understand what she was talking about.

Other questions I asked are:

What do you think about grades? Do you think they are effective? and, How do you grade your students?

I also asked her if she considered choice to be important in the classroom.

At some points in the interview, I rementioned things she had said, to see if I had understood them correctly.

After the interview, I listened to the tape, and realized that I should have spoken louder. I had to put up the volume so I could hear myself talk. So, I recommend everyone to speak up! Also, try to, if at all possible, to have your interview somewhere where you won't be interrupted, or, interrupted as little as possible. It gets a bit frustrating when you have to stop the interview, and stop the recording.

Probably the best, and most important advice I can give to anyone who has not had their first interview yet, is....relax, and be confident. It really helps- especially when you are doing something for the first time.

Well, it's late, and I'm really tired, so I'm going to get some sleep. I hope that this helped anyone who is having trouble starting. If you have any questions, feel free to write to me. I would like to receive mail from those of you who are connected, so I know you are available to write to.

P.S. did everyone get a chance to go to the one act festival at the school? I was an Usherette at the show tonight (saturday, November 28) and I saw Marcel and Nicki there. Brian was in the show! He did a great job. Congradulations Brian (if you are out there).

Keep in touch.
Hugs, Florencia Garcia (fgarcia)

Exhibit C

Research Interview #1
November 21, 1994

L: I'm going to ask you about how you can get kids to be motivated for learning and how these compare with the conceptions of students.

A: I don't know what you mean.

L: Okay. What are some strategies that you use to get kids to be motivated to do their work in your class?

A: We write for other people in the class. And we write for publication and contests.

L: I think, like, writing is really one thing that kids are really motivated to do. You know, mostly . . . to . . . like . . . so they can share their own emotions with people.

A: Umhmm. So sharing it is a motivator. But you asked me a question. You said evaluation of students? What did you mean by that?

L: Yeah. Like . . . like what? Like what do you think is a definition or conception of motivation for literacy learning? Your conception. Your definition of motivation. 'Cause we need to compare that with the students' conception of motivation.

A: As a teacher, I guess, we're sales people. We want to get kids to pass or to survive or to live in a world society. It's more than just the classroom.

L: Yeah.

A: The classroom is kind of a microcosm. So I guess motivation is important. I don't know. I guess I start here and then I try to motivate people. You can probably . . . . How do you think I motivate? You can probably tell me better than I . . .

L: Yeah (chuckles).

A: How do you think I motivate?

L: Well, as a student, comparing your conception of motivation to a student's, I think a student is more motivated to get grades and impress his parents or even to just . . . 'Cause I know that a lot of people, they do it for the grade and they don't do it for themselves or for the teacher's benefit. They just do it for the grade, and so they'll BS on a bunch of it, and just like say what they think is meaningful to the teacher, and say what sounds important, even though they don't know anything about it or if they don't really mean it, and they just do that. And what's really important is how they really want to speak their mind. And say the truth and actually learn from it. 'Cause a lot of people don't learn from it if they're just saying what he thinks is right.

A: I think I try to encourage kids to be themselves and to speak the truth.

L: Yeah.

A: And sometimes it gets in the way (*chuckle*). 'Cause I say, "Okay, be yourselves and try to draw out the individual, give them their personality in the classroom. And sometimes I have a classroom with, you know, 20 personalities that I've drawn out, over the years. But the individual is important. And what he or she thinks is more important. Well, creative writing, when you have your point of view, I don't care what it is, as long as you give me the reason for it. You know what I mean. It can be very different. I don't have preconceived answers.

L: So, what do you think would happen if—not necessarily you personally—but if kids went to other teachers saying that, well we think that you should get us to be motivated about our learning and if they had ideas about learning, and the teacher turned them down? 'Cause I've seen that happen before.

Exhibit D

READING, WRITING, SPEAKING, SHARING

There's an entirely new class soon to be offered here at SAHS. There will be a Literature Class added to the schedule beginning in the 5th grading period. The class will be taught by Mrs. Harter, and will provide for credits needed in English.

This new class will involve open class discussion, students teaching students various classic pieces of literature and philosophy from around the world, and the exploration of poetry through reading, writing, and critiquing.

One of the most exciting things about this class, is that the agenda will be created by both the teacher and the student working together. This idea in the classroom invokes motivation and is much needed.

Paul Rodriguez

Exhibit E

Agenda
Research Team Meeting
February 2, 1995

Welcome
Purpose of meeting
Introductions
- Students: teacher collaborators
- Teachers: student collaborators

Brief history
Focus questions
Sharing
- Status report
- Data sources
- Other ideas?

Confidentiality
Plans for next time
- Focus group interview for April

Key Research Questions:
What is motivation?
What makes a difference in students' motivation?
How do teachers make decisions about ways to enhance students' motivation in classrooms?

What happens in classrooms and in schools when students and teachers explore these questions together? Do students and teachers find this to be a valuable process? What specific ideas do they generate together about ways to make learning motivating? What problems are encountered? What understandings are gained?

NRRC National Reading Research Center

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